

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 04143 301641Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 BIB-01 DHA-02

/075 W

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O P 301523Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6112

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT

RUQMNSJVAMEMBASSY SANA 555

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4143

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, KU

SUBJ: PRESS REACTION AND PRESS FREEDOM IN KUWAIT IN WAKE OF
AMENDMENT TO PRESS LAW

REF: A. KUWAIT 4127, B. KUWAIT 4022

1. PRIOR TO AUGUST 29 EVENTS DESCRIBED REF A, THERE HAD BEEN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KUWAIT 04143 301641Z

SOME PUBLIC INDICATION THAT TIGHTER GOK CONTROL OVER PRESS WOULD

BE EXERCISED. AUGUST 25 AL WATAN HAD QUOTED MIN INFO/DEPPRIMIN JABER AL ALI AS SAYING THAT "KUWAIT PRESS HAD FORFEITED . . . LARGE PART OF FREEDOM IT ENJOYS." HE COMPARED THE KUWAITI PRESS TO THE LEBANESE PRESS; HIS IMPLICATION WAS THAT KUWAITI NEWSPAPERS CAN BE "BOUGHT" BY INTERESTS HOSTILE TO THE GOVERNMENT. JABER AL ALI MET BRIEFLY WITH ALL LOCAL EDITORS NIGHT OF AUGUST 29, AFTER AMIRI DECREE, TO DISCUSS PROFESSIONAL AND PRESS ISSUES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE EXPRESSED VIEWS LIKE THOSE NOTED ABOVE, SPELLED OUT GOK CONCERN WITH MACHINATIONS OF VARIOUS ARAB EMBASSIES, AND EXPLAINED IMPACT OF AMENDED PRESS LAW (PARA 1.C REF A) TO GROUP OF SOMEWHAT COWED EW TORS.

2. IN FACT, 1961 KUWAITI PRESS LAW ALREADY HAD LIMITED FREEDOM OF PRESS. WE BELIEVE THAT NEW AMENDMENT IS DESIGNED TO COMPLETE BOTH THE NEW TIGHTER REGULATIONS GOVERNING WRITTEN MATERIAL DISTRIBUTED BY FOREIGN EMBASSIES (REF B) AND JABER AL ALI'S "JAWBON-ING," AS WELL AS TO HELP KEEP KUWAIT CALM IN WAKE OF AMIR'S ACTION.

3. EDITORIALS AND COMMENTS IN LOCAL PRESS MORNING OF AUG 30 GENERALLY SUPPORTED NECESSITY TO DISSOLVE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND UNCRITICALLY ACCEPTED AMIR'S STATEMENTS. EXCEPTION WAS ARAB DAILY AL WATAN, WHICH PRINTED ARTICLE QUOTING EXCERPTS FROM A BOOK BY CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERT, YEHIA AL GAMAD, ENTITLED "CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM IN KUWAIT." BOOK PUBLISHED IN 1971 AND REVIEWS PAST CONSTITUTIONAL CRISES WHICH WERE RESOLVED BY RESIGNATION CABINET, NOT DISSOLUTION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IMPLICATION IS THAT AMIRI DECREE PREMATURE AND NOT IN ACCORDANCE PROPER DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES.

4. THROUGH CONTACTS WITH LOCAL SOURCES IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT NEW ORDERS LIMITING PRESS ARE AIMED AT SHACKLING FOREIGN ARAB INFLUENCE IN KUWAIT AND USE OF KUWAIT PRESS AS PAID "MERCENARIES" OF OTHER ARAB NATIONS IN PROPUGATING OWN SELFISH INTERESTS. IN DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF AUG 30, ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY INFORMATION FOR RADIO AFFAIRS VERY ADAMANTLY DEFENDED NEED TO CURTAIL SUBVERSIVE ARAB ELEMENTS IN KUWAIT, NOT WESTERN ELEMENTS, AND ALLUDED TO KUWAIT CONCERN RE "GROWING NUMBER FOREIGN ARABS" IN COUNTRY.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 KUWAIT 04143 301641Z

5. ONE NEWSPAPER REPORTEDLY WILL BE SHUT DOWN UNDER AMENDED PRESS LAW. AT 1115 AUGUST 30 AL WATAN RECEIVED NOTICE IT WOULD BE SUSPENDED FOR ONE ONTH. ACCORDING TO CHIEF OF AL WATAN'S INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK, AL WATAN BEING MADE EXAMPLE IN ORDER GIVE TEETH TO NEW PRESS RULINGS. AL WATAN, IN SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT AFTERNOON, AUGUST 29, PRINTED ARTICLE HINTING THAT BAHRAIN NOW A "SUSPENDED DEMOCRACY" AND RAISING FEAR THAT KUWAIT WILL BECOME SAME. ARTICLE CALLS AMIRI

DECREE "GRAVE TREND IN HISTORY OF OUR DEMOCRATIC MARCH. . ."
AND CONTESTS AMIR'S POWERS ACCORDING TO W1 3,5 :9, 5857589,, TO
SUSPEND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THESE ALLEGATIONS AND AUGUST 30
FOLLOW UP ARTICLE APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN REASON FOR ONE MONTH
SUSPENSION IMPOSED UPON AL WATAN.
MAESTRONE

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